

POLITICS IN THE STREETS



The origins of the
civil rights movement
in Northern Ireland

Bob Purdie

Bob Purdie was born in Edinburgh in 1940. He graduated from the University of Warwick with a BA in history in 1979; he was awarded an M.Sc. in politics in 1980 and a Ph.D. in 1989 by the University of Strathclyde. He spent over seven years in Belfast, researching and lecturing in politics. At various times he has also worked as an engineering worker, a political organiser and a journalist. He is now a politics tutor at Ruskin College, Oxford. His previous publications include *Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class* (1980), joint editor with Austen Morgan, and numerous articles for Scottish and Irish political and historical journals.

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THE
BLACKSTAFF
PRESS

BELFAST

First published in 1990 by
The Blackstaff Press Limited
3 Galway Park, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 0AN, Northern Ireland

This book has received financial assistance under the
Cultural Traditions Programme which aims to encourage acceptance and
understanding of cultural diversity.

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Printed by The Guernsey Press Company Limited
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Purdie, Bob
Politics in the streets : the origins of the civil rights movement
in Northern Ireland.

1. Northern Ireland. Civil rights movements, history
1. Title

323.09416

ISBN 0-85640-437-3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Grateful acknowledgement is also made to: M. Allen and Emerald Music for permission to quote from 'Gerry's Walls' by James Young; Blackstaff Press Limited and the estate of John Hewitt for permission to quote from 'The coasters' (*The Selected John Hewitt*, 1981); and Thomas Kinsella for permission to quote from 'Butcher's Dozen: a lesson for the octave of Widgery' (Peppercanister 1, Dolmen Press, 1972).

*in memory of
my mother and father*

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FOREWORD

Bob Purdie's account of the origins of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland is warmly welcomed by those of us who knew about his researches and were looking forward to seeing his analysis of that crucial period. Bob may speak with an Edinburgh accent, but we count him as one of us. He has been able to get closer to the events and the personalities involved than many earlier writers, who in some cases obscured the real truth of the civil rights movement. The story needed to be told; Bob was the right person to tell it, and he has done a fine job.

At the outset the movement was supported by every shade of political colour, including some individual members of the Unionist Party. In the end the campaign was hijacked by the gunmen who created a new and even greater need for basic civil rights in Northern Ireland. Bob investigates the background and the various components that made civil rights such an issue in Northern Ireland. Sensitive to the misconduct of the Unionist government and incisive in his interpretation of each incident, he analyses the movement's failure to achieve adequate reform. The tragedy is that it was almost our last hope for change by the ballot box. This depended on parliamentary responses in the debating chamber at Stormont: street politics should have been complementary to a parliamentary interface.

But that was not to be, and *Politics in the Streets* explains why. However late this story is, there are still lessons to be learned. Bob has helped us to understand our problems better.

PADDY DEVLIN
BELFAST
1990

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
APL	Anti-Partition League
AUEWTASS	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers Technical and Administrative Staffs Section
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDU	Campaign for Democracy in Ulster
CPNI	Communist Party of Northern Ireland
CSJ	Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland
DCAC	Derry Citizens' Action Committee
DHAC	Derry Housing Action Committee
DUAC	Derry Unemployed Action Committee
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EEC	European Economic Community
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HCL	Homeless Citizens' League
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
IWG	Irish Workers' Group
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NDP	National Democratic Party
NICCL	Northern Ireland Council for Civil Liberties
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NIHT	Northern Ireland Housing Trust
NILP	Northern Ireland Labour Party
PD	People's Democracy
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RLP	Republican Labour Party
RSSF	Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SRC	Student Representative Council

TD	Teachta Dála (member of the Dáil)
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
YSA	Young Socialist Alliance